

ISLAM

Our envy leads us to our doom

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

The American space shuttle, Challenger, built at a cost of one billion dollars, was launched into space on January 28, 1986. But just one minute after its lift-off, it exploded violently, reducing itself and its seven passengers to ashes.

No one survived to tell the tale of the tragedy. Man went into space for the first time in 1957, and the space ship, Challenger, was the 25th space shuttle of its kind. It was ironic that millions of happily expectant people should have been watching the whole event on television.

The seven passengers who were annihilated in this disaster were rightly called 'Space Heroes' by the newspapers. One of these passengers was a school teacher, Christa McAuliffe, aged 37. She was to have given the first televised lessons to classes from a spacecraft. In her interview before the journey on January 28 with the Educational News Service, she said: "I feel probably safer going into space than driving around the New York streets." (*The Times of India*, January 30, 1986).

Our villagers envy the inhabitants of the capital. Those who live in the capital envy the New Yorkers. But the city-dwellers of New York are not any more satisfied with their lot than people anywhere else in the world. They share in the general restlessness of the developed world, hoping to cross new frontiers and find not only adventure, but safety and peace in space.

But with the cruel irony of fate, their representatives had no sooner set into space than they were reduced to nothingness in the worst disaster in space history. All their hopes and aspirations were as if they had never existed. With what high hopes man launches himself on new ventures, and how cataclysmic is his end!